

Extraordinary friendship in times of war

The Girl and the Soldier

ALINE SAX & ANN DE BODE

A small village behind the front, during World War I. While soldiers struggle to fight, life behind the front goes on. At the inn, where soldiers come to catch their breath, lives a blind girl. One day, she finds someone sitting on her bench: a black soldier, with the 'scent of roasted nuts'.

A friendship slowly develops. He tells her about warm Africa, about the wife and child he has left behind. She tells him about her father, who is also fighting at the front. In the little girl, the soldier does not see the mistrust and fear he sees in other people. He feels comfortable with her; she's not scared. The girl bakes bread for 'her soldier', but that day the bench remains empty. She goes to find him at the front.

A subtle, sober and unexpectedly harsh story, with powerful paintings in atmospheric greys and greens

COBRA

The novel does not avoid the suffering and misery of the war. Ann De Bode's intimate illustrations show fear, sorrow and pain. Sax writes her story in a sober, well-considered style, zooming in alternately on the girl and the soldier. This is emphasised typographically in the form of white and black pages. The sparkling dialogues are presented identically in both stories, but the reflections of the girl and the soldier give the conversations a different slant.

Aline Sax uses poetic language to subtly bring a piece of history to life. A book to read again and again

FRIESCH DAGBLAD



AUTHORS



Aline Sax (b. 1984) wrote her first book when she was fifteen. Many years and a PhD in history later, Aline is a well-known voice in Flanders as a historical novelist. Her work has been translated into Danish, German, Swedish and English. *Photo © JuttaArt241* **Ann De Bode** (b. 1956) has illustrated more than 200 books and also written a number herself. Her oeuvre includes everything from counting books to adventure stories.

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